



Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee

Date: Monday, July 13, 2020

Time: 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

In attendance: Heather Barber, Darcy Devney, Jenny Raitt, Daniel Amstutz, Doug Mayo-Wells, Len Diggins, Rachael Stark, Phil Goff, Ali Carter, Kelly Lynema, Joanne Preston.

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introduction to Remote Meeting, including Ground Rules.

Daniel Amstutz read a set of prepared remarks explaining the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed an Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

Amstutz also noted that Nelson/Nygaard staff have attended three out of four Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee (STPAC) meetings as outlined in their scope of work. They will not attend this meeting; it is expected they will attend their last STPAC meeting in the fall to discuss the process for finalizing the transportation plan.

2. Public Comments.

There were none.

3. Approval of Minutes from June 3, 2020.

Minutes were approved.

4. Project Status Update.

Amstutz noted that the survey for the transportation plan has received over 1,000 responses and will be closed out on July 17. With the help of Kristine Shah and

the Council on Aging, more than 1,000 notices via doorhangers and paper flyers were distributed to Arlington Housing Authority Properties and through Arlington Eats. These were translated into Mandarin Chinese and Spanish and targeted elderly populations that may be more difficult to reach due to COVID-19. Along with a link to the survey people could also call a phone number and leave a message with a comment. Finally, staff are seeking a few more people to participate in virtual focus groups this week or next week, on the topics of Getting Around with Disabilities and Mobility Impairments, Neighborhood Transportation Issues, and Public Transportation.

Amstutz provided a high level overview of the preliminary results of the transportation survey. There was a good split among the responses about how long people lived in Arlington, with at least 20% from each category. Over 80% of people who responded are homeowners. The geographic diversity of responses is a good mix, and no one neighborhood or section of town is over-represented. Many people who responded work in Arlington, Boston, or Cambridge, but a high percentage also work in other parts of the region. Higher-income people (with household incomes above \$100,000) are over-represented in the survey, and make up about 70% of responses. The three plan goals that received the more priority in the survey responses were: considers the needs of diverse populations and people of all ages; prioritizes a pedestrian and walk-friendly environment; and focus on improved transit connections and travel times. For the question about what kinds of improvements people want to see on streets, traffic calming on residential neighborhood streets received the most votes, while striped on-street parking generally received the least. Bicycle and pedestrian priorities also received a high percentage of votes.

Phil Goff noted that the wording of the choice “striped on-street parking” in the street improvements question may have affected the responses to this – he noted most people want to have on street parking on neighborhood streets but likely don’t think that striping is necessary. Amstutz responded that he may be right, and the idea behind this question was to understand what types of street elements people value.

5. Connect Arlington Virtual Forum.

Jenny Raitt presented about the Connect Arlington Virtual Forum, which will take place on July 30 at 7 pm. Nelson/Nygaard will not staff the forum but they are able to provide materials to help promote and present at the forum. The general format of the forum that Town staff are suggesting are to start with a presentation of the overview of the project, its goals, and the timeline; some details from the Factbook and results from the transportation survey; an open Q & A; and then move into breakout groups that could potentially have the same topics as the focus groups that are being done. Members of the STPAC would be facilitators of these small breakout groups and report out afterwards or there could be a survey

poll, depending on the size of the groups. The forum should last about 1 ½ hour to 1 ¾ hour.

Rachael Stark recommended that each breakout group have a designated note taker for each group in addition to a facilitator. This would require an additional person assigned to each group but would make the facilitator's job much easier. Raitt agreed that this is a good idea if we can get the volunteers or staff to do it. Doug Mayo-Wells volunteered to take notes for one of the breakout groups. Raitt noted it would be good to have committee members as facilitators since they know the project better but understands some people may be more comfortable as note takers. Heather Barber volunteered to take notes or facilitate a group. Darcy Devney also volunteered to take notes. Stark, Goff, and Len Diggins also offered to facilitate the breakout groups.

Stark requested that the agenda and presentation get sent out in advance of the forum. Raitt confirmed this can be done. Devney asked if the Factbook will be available before the forum. Amstutz explained that Nelson/Nygaard is still working through comments and edits to the draft version, with the plan to have the completed Factbook available by the end of July, but not before the forum. He expects Nelson/Nygaard can provide highlights of the Factbook and survey results as part of developing materials for the forum. Many of the maps and graphics from the Factbook are complete, and can be shared, but some of the materials from the Factbook need to be revised before they should be shared publicly. Stark suggested including the most interesting or surprising maps or facts for sharing. There was additional discussion about when to post the agenda and materials and sending a draft agenda and presentation to the committee.

Raitt recognized Kelly Lynema from the Department of Planning and Community Development who recently organized a similar forum on another project, and asked her to speak about experiences from that forum. Lynema explained some of the logistics to consider when running the forum, including making sure people calling in can participate and having troubleshooting information handy for people with technical difficulties. Staff support for monitoring the meeting is important to identify issues and keeping the meeting running well. For her forum they planned to do breakout rooms, but they had too many people attend, so they decided to have a discussion with all the attendees in the same space. This was a decision they had to make on the fly and it ended up working fine. Raitt noted there need to be enough facilitators for the breakout groups to work. Lynema said a facilitator guide is important to help them go smoothly. She noted other after-forum actions they took, including sending out communications with the recording of the meeting and allowing a couple weeks for people to answer a follow-up survey. Committee members and staff discussed the chat function of Zoom and if it can be used or whether it should be used for the forum.

Diggins asked for more information about the objective of the facilitators and what questions the groups were supposed to answer. Raitt noted that the

questions/discussion prompts will likely be based off the survey or the focus groups. The breakout groups could each have a different topic or each group would answer the same questions. This hasn't been determined just yet, but she is open to suggestions. Mayo-Wells noted that topical groups could suffer from self-selection bias. Randomly assigning groups could be a way around this, and get people to speak about things we might not otherwise hear from them about. Raitt noted that the breakout groups are usually assigned randomly, but if people had a preference you'd use the chat box to indicate that. Without the chat box that may be difficult and having questions that are broader may be a better plan. Diggins agreed that having a random distribution of people in the groups is a good idea. Devney noted another way of sifting people would be by demographics, if possible. Raitt noted that people would have to be forthcoming with their information and then people would need to be assigned to rooms, which takes time and effort.

Lynema asked for clarification on the outcome of the forum to understand the best structure of it. Raitt explained that we are trying to keep people engaged in the process and also report out what we've heard so far, as well as trying to get additional feedback. This is also sort of a substitute for the mobile workshops that we planned to do in June but had to cancel because of the pandemic. Barber noted that there have been many opportunities to participate. The forum can be structured so the first part is about the progress of the plan, then it would go into the breakout groups for people that want to provide additional feedback. Lynema noted having a couple of Q & A sessions as well helps keep people engaged.

Raitt wrapped up the discussion and noted Town staff will follow up with the draft annotated agenda and presentation for feedback from the committee. Diggins asked if another virtual forum could be done after this one we are planning for. Raitt noted staff can go back and see what was planned for the engagement strategy and if another forum would make sense later in the project process. She noted doing a prep meeting before this upcoming forum would be a good idea too.

6. Closing and Next Steps.

Amstutz noted he will follow up with Nelson/Nygaard tomorrow and set up a prep meeting before the forum. He will also send out the draft agenda and presentation next week.